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A FEW WORDS

ON

IRISH QUESTIONS.

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BY

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AND PUBLIC ORATOR.

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A FEW WORDS

ON IRISH QUESTIONS.

THE question of the Irish Church has of late occupied so many tongues and pens, has been so much discussed both in public and private, that there are now probably few, even of those who do not "stand by their party," who have not already made up their minds on one side or the other.

The controversy therefore being already virtually decided, it may well be thought superfluous to say another word on the subject. It is however possible that the return of a Conservative majority in the new Parliament may adjourn for some years a definite solution: in this case the controversy will be prolonged or renewed, and words spoken now, may, if they have any value, be remembered then. Besides, there are other questions connected with Ireland which have not been brought forward in a definite shape, and on which candidates for the new Parliament will not be required to pledge themselves.

Every man who loves his country feels it to be his duty as a citizen to lend his aid, however feeble, to that which he conceives to be the cause of justice; then, whatever be the issue, he will have the satisfaction of reflecting that he

has done what he could to help the right or prevent the wrong.

The author of this paper has no special claim to be heard on the question, but like thousands of his fellow-countrymen, he has heard, read and thought a good deal about it, he has endeavoured to clear his mind of all prejudice, sectarian or national, and in the course of a recent visit to Ireland, has had an opportunity of conversing with persons of all classes and all opinions.

He proposes to speak first of the state of feeling in Ireland towards Great Britain generally, and then to refer especially to the three main grievances, the Established Church, the Tenure of Land, and the Legislative Union.

It must be acknowledged that among all classes in Ireland, Protestants as well as Catholics, there prevails a feeling of dislike towards England, not by any means implying disaffection to the Government or desire of independence, but rather akin to the feeling of jealousy with which provinces regard their metropolis, the feeling which the Breton bears to the Parisian; or, to take a better illustration, the feeling which the Rhenish Prussian bears to the Prussian proper. An English stranger can hardly help observing an undercurrent of dislike to his nation, in spite of the unfailing courtesy shewn to himself and the anxious desire of his hosts to please and be pleased. He will observe this feeling among persons of undoubted English descent, and even among ardent Orangemen; whose bond of union is not love of Protestant England, but hatred of Irish Papists. The alleged causes are the systematic neglect of Ireland by the Government and people of Great Britain, the contemptuous way in which our newspapers speak of Irishmen, and the airs of superiority assumed by Englishmen and Scotchmen who come

among them. The first is the only serious ground of complaint, and this we trust is about to be removed. For the second, a Press so free, and out-spoken as ours cannot help giving umbrage to an over-sensitive people, and the third is due mainly to the preconceived antipathy which misconstrues as insolence what is only shyness and reserve.

In proportion as the mutual hostility between Protestants and Romanists has declined, as time has worn away the recollection of reciprocal injuries, there has grown up a sentiment of their common nationality as Irishmen, a sentiment which first found expression at the close of the last century, in the association of the "United Irishmen," the precursors of the Fenians of our day. In both cases the Priests as a body discouraged the movement, because it was made in concert with heretics and did not originate with themselves; but in both cases large numbers sympathized with the feelings which prompted the conspiracy, though they kept aloof from it because they feared to employ violence and foresaw the inevitable result. It would however be a great error to suppose that the Fenians were ever as formidable as the United Irishmen of seventy years ago. All trustworthy testimonies agree in stating that the numbers actually pledged to revolt were extremely small, and those confined almost to one class, the apprentices of Dublin, Cork, and other cities. The new and really formidable feature in the conspiracy was the American element. The desperadoes, whom the cessation of the civil war had thrown loose upon society, supplied leaders for the attempts in Ireland, organized the raids in Canada, and did their best to bring about a war between Great Britain and the United States. All agree that the conspiracy, never really formidable to the empire, however dangerous to individuals, is now virtually at

an end. During the long nights of the coming winter, gangs of burglars may assume a comparatively respectable name, and under the guise of Fenians, attack solitary houses in search of plunder; but the Constabulary, whose loyal zeal has never flagged, will know how to deal with them. Fear, then, need have no influence on our counsels. There is no thinking man on either side of the Channel, who, if he be moderately acquainted with history, does not see that the time is gone by in which it would have been possible to effect a forcible separation between England and Ireland. Even under the most favourable circumstances, rebellion in Ireland has had ill-luck. In the reign of Elizabeth, and the early years of James I., when the English pale was confined almost to a strip of coast between Dundalk and Cork, in 1641, 1649, and 1690, when the English were divided amongst themselves, and again, in 1798, with French assistance, rebellion failed. What chance would it have now, when railroads, steamers, and telegraphs have multiplied incalculably the resources of government, and by drawing closer the relations between the two islands increased manifold the numbers of those Irishmen to whose interests a separation would be fatal?

Again, even if Ireland were united against Great Britain, she is now relatively much weaker than in former times. In 1841, the population of Ireland was more than two-fifths of that of Great Britain, it is now probably about one-fifth.

These considerations are so obvious that they cannot escape the notice of any sane man. A few desperate or dishonest men, practising upon hotheaded and thoughtless youths, may keep alive for awhile the semblance of conspiracy, but the cause is hopelessly lost, except in the now improbable contingency of a war with France or the United

States; such an opportunity as that of which the Irish Protestants availed themselves to extort from the weakness of England the independence of the Parliament on College Green.

Without foreign aid, the main object of the Fenian conspiracy is unattainable, and the British Government has no more to fear from it than the Government of the United States has to fear from the brotherhood of the Ku Klux Klan. It has, however, had the effect of directing attention to Irish affairs, it has made us feel that we must no longer delay to examine into and redress all Irish grievances; and thus, as we trust, its final result will be the consolidation of the empire which it was intended to destroy.

Neither the church question nor the land question had anything to do with the origin of Fenianism. Protestants not only took part in it, but are believed to have begun it; and the tenant farmers, almost to a man, stood aloof. The strong sympathy felt in England for the cause of "oppressed nationalities," spread to Ireland and there took a practical shape. As early as 1859 there existed some sort of organization of which the object was the deliverance of Ireland. America supplied leaders, of whom all could collect subscriptions and some could drill recruits.

After several years of such leadership the confederacy finds itself without money and without men.

The agitation in Ireland is kept up still by a small but active band of newspaper writers and lecturers, who are allowed a latitude which would not be permitted under any other government in the world. These men are powerful for mischief, notwithstanding, perhaps because of, their gross ignorance and their unscrupulous mendacity*; and it may be

* Day by day, the *Irishman* newspaper inculcates—to use the French

questioned whether government acts wisely in not using all lawful means to silence them. It seems hard to punish the poor dupes who commit overt acts of treason, while their instigators come off with impunity.

The alarm caused by the Fenians has no doubt been injurious to Ireland in checking peaceful enterprise, and in deterring capitalists from investing their money there; it has for the time thrown an impediment in the path of progress; but if we take a wider view there is no doubt that there has been a continuous and rapid improvement in the condition of the Irish people. The descriptions given by travellers in former days seem to the traveller of the present time wild exaggerations. Ruined dwellings, generally the evidence of bygone prosperity, attest in Ireland the decrease of over-population, which implies an increase of prosperity for those who remain. And all native testimony agrees that this is the fact. It is true that the Irish hovel will bear no comparison for comfort and cleanliness with an English cottage; it is true that the children who are playing round the door are clothed scantily and in rags, but they are lithe of limb and rosy cheeked; if ill clad they are well fed, and manage to sleep soundly under their squalid roofs.

Wages have risen all over the country, to the great advantage of the labourer; and, thanks to steamboats and

phrase—'hatred and contempt of the government.' It denounces British tyranny and gives glowing accounts of the progress of Fenianism in America. One day in August last it announced in large letters: 'Insurrection in India: two hundred thousand men in arms.' No statements are too absurd, provided they minister to the popular hatred of England. About the same time a Fenian, just released from prison, delivered in Cork a lecture on Irish Poetry which he commenced thus: 'From Edmund Spenser to Thomas Moore persecution and exile have been the lot of the bards of Erin.' Conceive Edmund Spenser a bard of Erin, and Thomas Moore persecuted by Lord Lansdowne in his exile at Sloperton Cottage! But the lecturer was enthusiastically cheered.

railways, England supplies a market which is gradually raising the value of agricultural produce in the remotest parts of Ireland to the enrichment of the farmer. The comfortable houses of the Priests, the numerous churches and convents lately built, though we may think the latter a deplorable misuse of money, shew at all events that the lower and middle classes have had a great deal of wealth to spare. The Ireland of to-day differs widely indeed from the Ireland described by Arthur Young at the end of the last century, and from the Ireland described by Inglis in 1834. The terrible visitation of famine and pestilence in 1846—1848 brought a blessing in its train. Emigration has left a fair field for home industry: peace, security, and a just and beneficent government (for such on the whole it has undoubtedly been), have done the rest.

With regard to emigration, the recent returns shew a sensible decrease. Emigrants find that wages in the New England cities are not higher than they are at home compared with the price of living; instead of sending money to their relatives at home, they send discouraging reports; not a few have actually come back. *Ceteris paribus*, a hut in Kerry is better than a cellar in New York. In a year or two the natural increase of the population will probably equal, and soon exceed, the drain caused by emigration, and there seems to be no ground for the fear of depletion entertained by some pessimists.

The social state of Ireland shows as much improvement as its material state. Agrarian outrages have become very rare. The force of public opinion has been brought to bear upon landlords and their agents, and prevented them from treating their tenants with injustice or even harshness. The fear of public censure is with the high-spirited race of Irish

landlords far more powerful than the fear of private assassination, and instances of tyranny on the part of landlords and agents are now very rare. In a recent notorious case in Tipperary the conduct of the landlord was universally condemned by his own class. To some extent also the evils of absenteeism have diminished. The facilities of communication are now such that a landlord has no excuse for not occasionally visiting his Irish property. But an occasional visit does not avail much towards the establishment of cordial personal relations between landlord and tenant.

When a landlord has his chief residence among his tenants, when he treats them justly and kindly, he speedily wins not only their respect but devotion, and, I had almost said, loyalty. He becomes almost like the chieftain to his clan. For the Irish peasant knows no measure in his feelings towards his superiors: he hates cordially or he worships. No differences of race or creed affect this feeling. The Martins of Connemara were Protestants, descended, it is said, from one of Cromwell's troopers, and no Highland chieftain ever commanded more unreserved allegiance than they did. It is true that they were loved for their faults as well as their virtues, in both of which they were, notwithstanding their descent, truly Irish; but many names might be mentioned of Protestant landlords of Saxon blood still living, who without improvidence and prodigality have won the enthusiastic love of their Celtic and Catholic tenantry. If a landlord has once taken the trouble to win hearts so willing to be won, surely he would find the routine of pleasure in London or Paris tame in comparison. Under a just and kind landlord, even under a just and kind agent, the Irish tenant is perfectly contented: the question is, what can be done by legislation to secure the tenant's interests against a landlord or

agent who is neither just nor kind? It must be such a measure as would not involve any interference with the rights of property, and would simply convert a moral obligation acknowledged by many into a legal obligation binding upon all. But of this hereafter.

The description of Ireland just given differs so much from those which we are accustomed to hear and read, that it will be received with incredulity. But the writer is confident that it will be in the main confirmed by the testimony of those who know the country best. The evils of Ireland are constantly exaggerated, and that with perfect good faith, by enthusiastic and imaginative patriots, hurried along with the torrent of their own eloquence, and, less excusably, by philosophers wanting a field for the application of their "heroic remedies."

If one compares Ireland with Great Britain, the contrast is doubtless in many ways sad enough, but, to be just, we should bear in mind the different historical antecedents of the two countries, and we ought to compare the Ireland of the present with the Ireland of former times. Less than three centuries ago the "Englishry" and the "Irishry" were sundered by differences almost as great as those which separated the early settlers of America from the Red Indians. Twice at least since that time the progress of civilization has been interrupted by a general massacre of the Protestant settlers and by a consequent period of chaos and confusion. Now the English language has penetrated to the remotest corners of the island, and English law reigns supreme. Priest and parson live everywhere on peaceable, often on cordial, terms together. Saxon and Celt have mingled in inextricable union. Men bearing names undoubtedly English declaim about Brian Boroimhe and the wrongs of

their ancient kings; men bearing names undoubtedly Irish sit on the judgment-seat to sentence Fenians. Young Irishmen find the best field for their honourable ambition in the service of the Empire, and furnish a large proportion of the successful candidates for the Indian and Civil Services and for direct commissions in the army. Free trade with Great Britain is essential to the prosperity of Irish manufactures, commerce, and agriculture. The advantages of Union are so obvious, the disadvantages of separation—were separation possible—so obvious also, that no thinking man can seriously advocate the latter.

Though I look thus hopefully upon the prospects of Ireland as it is, I do not draw the conclusion that nothing is to be done. On the contrary, I think that much may be done by legislation to help forward a cause which has already made good progress, and to hasten the result which time and the natural course of things are surely bringing about, namely, the complete fusion of the inhabitants of both islands in one harmonious polity.

On the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church, opinions in Ireland vary just as might be expected.

The farmers, who no longer pay tithe directly and have nothing to gain by the change, are indifferent; so are the peasantry and the lower orders in towns; the upper and middle classes of Roman Catholic laymen are unanimous in favour of the measure; the Priests ostensibly in favour of it, but really, it is said, lukewarm, hesitating between pleasure at the humiliation of an ancient foe and regret for the loss of a valuable grievance.

The Protestant Clergy almost to a man are opposed to the measure; so are nine-tenths of the Protestant laymen, and a large majority of the Protestant dissenters, of the Presby-

terians especially. So strong is this feeling, that I have heard grave men assert that if the measure be carried they fully expect a rising in Ulster. This fear is doubtless exaggerated, but there can be no question of the strong antipathy with which the measure is regarded in the north, and it is worth considering whether, as concerns disendowment, it would not be well to exempt the Province of Ulster from the operation of the Act. Such a half-measure would no doubt be open to ridicule, but we in England are accustomed to compromises and tolerant of anomalies, and often justify by practice what is theoretically indefensible. Few only in this case support the disendowment on the ground that all endowments are wrong. With the majority of Liberals no abstract principle is involved in the question; it is a measure of expediency, the object of which is to content the Roman Catholics. If we can do this without discontenting the Protestants, so much the better. But it is probable that the Liberal leaders will choose to brave the anger of the Protestants on the other side of the Channel rather than alienate their Radical allies on this.

The counter-project half-avowed by the present Government seems to be, to leave the Protestant Church substantially as it is, and to endow and establish the Roman Catholic Church by the side of it. This measure would probably be even less acceptable to the Irish Protestants than the other: it would be opposed on principle by all the Radical party; and such a mass of Protestant prejudice would be arrayed against it in England and Scotland, that its realization seems impossible. But, were it practicable, there is, from a statesman's point of view, much to recommend it. The Roman Catholic Church now constitutes an "*imperium in imperio*" of the most formidable kind, and by its influence is able to

thwart and neutralize the most beneficent measures of Government. The system of national education, for instance, is half paralyzed by the hostility of the Bishops and Priests*. If we could make them supporters instead of opponents of government—if we could make them inculcate loyalty in place of fomenting disaffection†—we should be able to deal with Irish questions in a far more effectual manner. But it is objected, that they would not accept the gift. They have never had the offer; and it is a very cheap mode of earning the praise of disinterestedness to declare that they will refuse what they think will never be offered. If a scheme were seriously proposed, embracing a handsome salary for the Bishops, seats in the House of Lords for some of their number, and a glebe and parsonage secured to every priest as a freehold under the protection of the Common Law, it is not likely that they would persist in their refusal. The parish priests, who are said to suffer much under the oppression of their bishops, would certainly be in favour of it in their hearts: the laity, who complain loudly of the excessive fees demanded by the priests, would openly advocate it, and the bishops, even if they were proof against the temptations of rank and wealth, would be placed in a most invidious position by continuing to oppose the wishes of priests and people. Besides, there is reason to think that many of the bishops fret under the tyranny of Rome, and would, under favourable circumstances, form a Hibernian party, analogous to the Gallican party in the French Church.

* One of the least cheering signs of the time is the readiness of liberal candidates in Ireland to profess themselves advocates of denominational, as opposed to national, education, in order to win the support of the priests. No true liberal can be sincere in such a profession. It is to be hoped that on this point no government will give way.

† It is but just to add, that all priests do not encourage disaffection; and even those who do, discountenance rebellion.

The opposition of Rome would remain to be overcome. The present bland and benevolent Pontiff is believed to entertain the most rancorous hatred of the British Government ever since the time of the "Papal Aggression;" but, though infallible, he is neither immutable nor immortal. He or his successor would scarcely be able to resist the pressure of Irish opinion, and would not be insensible to the triumph gained in the recognition of his Church by the Defender of the Protestant Faith, and the admission of Roman Prelates among the Peers of the United Kingdom. In home affairs there is no sovereign more enslaved to routine than the Pope, in foreign affairs there is none whose will is more absolute. Of course the British Government would stipulate on its part for the nomination of the bishops, as in France, or for a veto on the appointment, as in Rhenish Prussia. Against these precedents the Pope could not maintain his "*non possumus.*"

It would be a great boon to the peasantry if the amount of marriage fees and Easter dues payable to the priest were fixed by law, and many scandals would be prevented if the priests in celebrating marriages were compelled to conform to the same legal requirements as the English clergy.

There is, I think, little force in the objection, that the Roman Catholic Church, since it has no means of modifying its dogmas in accordance with the conclusions of science and criticism, must perish in the spread of education, and that therefore it is not worth while to spend money in securing its allegiance. Many years, perhaps centuries, must elapse before the Roman Catholic Clergy cease to exercise a predominant influence in Ireland; an influence which, to do them justice, rests upon a sounder basis than the claims which to us seem untenable and the dogmas we hold to be absurd. It rests

upon the affection and gratitude of the people, who see in them men who devote their lives to teaching, by precept and example, honesty, sobriety, chastity and all virtues. Such a body must retain its hold for many years to come, and it would be a social misfortune if it were otherwise.

However, to a statesman sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. He must avoid present obstacles, and seek immediate advantages. A pilot will not steer his ship against an iceberg because he knows it will melt in the next summer. And Protestant prejudice is an iceberg of a most formidable and durable kind, against which such a project would doubtless suffer disastrous shipwreck. *A fortiori*, such a measure as the establishment of the Roman Catholic in place of the Protestant Church is not to be thought of.

Assuming, then, that the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Protestant Church is inevitable, all friends of that Church must feel that "'twere well if 'twere done quickly." No other minister will be likely to deal more tenderly with the Church than Mr Gladstone. He tells us that the measure he is about to propose will leave the Clergy in the enjoyment of five-eighths of their actual revenues.

Now, according to the Report of the Commission lately issued, the total annual revenues of the Church amount to £581,000, of which £364,000 comes from tithe rent-charge, £204,000 from rent of land, and the residue from investments in Government stock, &c. If we take Mr Gladstone's statement in what seems its natural sense, we infer that the Church will be left in permanent possession of £363,000. It is supposed that he means to leave to the Church, the parsonage houses, and all land, tithe, or money given or bequeathed by private individuals since the Reformation, including perhaps the lands secured to the Church at the

settlement of Ulster. But these sources would hardly suffice for the large amount (£363,000) just mentioned. So it is conjectured by some, that in estimating the amount still to be left to the Church, he included the value of the Church fabrics, and the life interest of the existing clergy, who will enjoy their present income during their lives. But it is difficult to assign a money value to buildings, which in many cases will cease to be wanted, and which are in all cases unsaleable; and the life-interest of the present clergy cannot fairly be reckoned as the property of the Church. Be this as it may, the ultimate deficiency will not be so great but that we may hope to supply it by voluntary contributions, especially when we consider that a large saving may be effected by a more equable and economical distribution of the remaining funds.

When we know that the Irish Roman Catholics out of their comparative poverty have contributed £700,000 a year to their clergy*; when we see what amount has been collected as a "sustentation fund," by the members of the Free-kirk in Scotland, the friends of the Anglican Church may well contemplate such a demand without dismay. If there is any vitality at all in the body, the amount required will be obtained without difficulty. If need be, English Churchmen, who form the most wealthy and not the least generous community in the world, will render help. In all English churches sermons will be preached and subscriptions collected periodically for "the suffering Church of Ireland." Here is a mine of untold wealth. Neither will the call be sudden. As vested interests are to be scrupulously respected, half a century

* This is the estimate of the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Trench, who calls the Roman Catholic Church of Ireland 'the richest Church in the world.' So I read in a newspaper report of his late Charge.

will elapse before the whole sum is required. Meanwhile, a fund might be raised both for immediate and prospective use, and entrusted to a committee consisting of the Archbishops and Bishops, who should act as trustees and administrators. Thus the Church will suffer little or nothing in its material interests, and the Clergy should

> "disdain the lore
> Of nicely calculated less or more,"

when they contrast the possible loss with the certain gain which will accrue to them by being relieved from the odium of their present position.

It is not too much to say that the whole civilized world, from the Pope, who in his Encyclical denounces toleration as a sin, to the "advanced thinkers," who regard all creeds with equal indifference, is agreed in demanding the establishment of religious equality in Ireland.

It is true that our foreign critics habitually exaggerate the wealth of the Irish Church, ignore the services which the clergy unquestionably render to society, and stigmatize the original establishing of the Protestant Church as a deliberate act of tyranny and oppression, instead of recognizing the fact that it was imperatively dictated to the English Government of the day by their conception of sound policy and of the interests of Ireland; still the broad fact remains, that the Irish Establishment is unanimously condemned by the voice of what has been happily called "contemporary posterity."

Russia, in her comparative seclusion, could not afford to disregard the opinion of the civilized world, and abolished serfdom: a much less sacrifice is demanded from us, and till we make it, we cannot have our due moral influence in the world's councils. (For, let me say parenthetically, I am not

a believer in the Imperialist doctrine, that "moral influence" is only the product of three factors, men, guns, and a disposition to use them.)

How often have we, while preaching civil and religious liberty all over the world, had the Irish Church thrown in our teeth, and felt it to be an unanswerable retort!

"Pudet hæc opprobria nobis
Et dici potuisse et non potuisse refelli."

The passing of this measure will be everywhere received as a convincing proof of goodwill on the part of the English towards the Irish people; the great pretext on which agitators have founded their complaints of English tyranny will be removed, and Irish discontent will languish and die away when no longer fostered by foreign sympathy.

Of course, as in all changes which affect social relations, the good will not be unmixed. There are many parishes in Ireland where the Protestant Rector, though he preaches on Sunday in an almost empty church*, is yet in secular matters a kind friend and counsellor, and a liberal benefactor to his rival's flock, and thus supplies the place of the absent landlord. The successors of the present clergy, diminished

* The Dean of Cork preached a sermon to the Church Congress the other day on the text: 'And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them' (*Luke* v. 7). Does he draw the inference that the net is breaking because of the multitude of fishes? One Sunday last month, as I passed through the streets of an Irish city, I saw people kneeling round the doors of the Roman Catholic Churches and spreading even to the middle of the road-way for want of room in the buildings, while the Protestant Cathedral would have held ten times the number of the congregation present in it. The same afternoon I saw in a Protestant church in the neighbourhood the clergyman reading the evening service to his wife. The Dean might have found a more appropriate text in the fifth verse of the same chapter: 'We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.' The partners in the other ship may say: 'It is not for want of fish in your part of the lake, because our rivals close by you catch them in abundance; it must be the fault of the old net: throw it away, and we will help you to make a new one.'

in number, with a smaller income and a less dignified position, will not be able to discharge these duties so well.

Nor can it be denied, that many difficulties will arise connected with the alteration in the status of the clergy and the reconstitution of the Church. These difficulties present themselves in all their complexity and appear especially formidable to a legally trained mind, but we know that the rough logic of facts cuts many a knot which the most ingenious reasoning cannot untie. The Act which disestablishes, i.e. disconnects from the State the Irish Branch of the United Church, must necessarily re-establish it in a different sense, by recognizing its existence as a corporate body, legally entitled to hold property and to make by-laws for its own government, as other corporate bodies do, and with the same restrictions.

For the re-constitution of the Church, the natural method would seem to be this: as soon as the Act is passed, the Bishops will form themselves into a provisional government of the Church, and will summon a Convocation according to the ancient model, but including a representation of the laity. The Convocation will then draw up a constitution, determining the mode of electing Bishops, nominating to livings, and generally regulating Church discipline. In such a Convocation, we may be pretty sure that an attempt will be made to alter certain rubrics, to modify portions of the Catechism and of the Baptismal and Communion services. If these changes be refused, we may expect the secession of a small number to the Presbyterians or Methodists; if they be conceded, we may expect a still smaller secession to Rome. In either case the Church of England, which will now resume its old official title, will remain in Communion with the new Church as it is in Communion with the Episcopal Church in America,

notwithstanding the changes made in the ritual by the founders of that Church. It is not unlikely that the formation of the Episcopal Church in America, after the declaration of independence, may afford in some respects a model for the reconstitution of the Church in Ireland; and this, in its turn, at no distant day, serve as a model for yet another Church under similar circumstances*. If the members of the disestablished Church are really animated by a spirit of union, the terms of union will be settled without much difficulty, and the removal of the external bond will make no difference. A Church which is held together only by such a bond, is little better than a legal fiction, a Church in name, not in fact.

With regard to the land question, the writer has already expressed his belief, founded on personal observation and a concurrence of testimony, that there has been of late years a marked improvement in the condition of the agricultural classes, and in the relations between landlord and tenant. The number of absentee landlords is much diminished, though the traveller when he asks to whom such and such an

* The disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England is an event which can scarcely be regarded as improbable, when we reflect that it is one of the avowed objects of a party which, if it continues to grow at its present rate, must before long have the supreme direction of affairs. I should regard such a measure as a great national misfortune, but the implacable doctrinaire who condemns an institution on principle is deaf to all pleas of practical usefulness. Eager to establish, at all hazards and at any cost, the two articles of his creed, 'separation of church and state' and 'the voluntary principle,' he takes no account of the fact that the clergy exercise throughout England an influence for good, promoting education and repressing criminal tendencies, the full power of which will only be appreciated when it is removed. 'Extincta amabitur eadem.' Even those who admit the beneficent influence of the clergy maintain that it would be increased by disestablishment and disendowment, that their zeal would be quickened, &c. But a pauperized and fanatical priesthood is much to be dreaded. The present clergy are so useful to society precisely because they are of all priesthoods the least priestly, the most tolerant, the most generous, the most charitable.

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estate belongs, still too commonly hears the answer, "A man in Dublin," or "A man in London," name unknown. If all landlords were—as many already are—resident and mindful of their duty; or even if all non-residents were—as many are—careful to choose for their agents conscientious and intelligent gentlemen, there would be no need for any legislation. But unfortunately the mutual confidence of landlord and tenant, which is almost universal in England, and which makes the tenant at will feel as secure as if he had ever so long a lease, exists as yet only partially in Ireland.

Where an estate is let and sub-let to unscrupulous middlemen, where careless supervision alternates with forcible exaction, the minds of the tenants are naturally filled with distrust and hatred. One who is not secure of his holding, and feels no confidence that he will be compensated for the improvements he makes, will have no inducement to make any, and falls into thriftless and hand-to-mouth habits of life. Is it possible by any legislative measure to remedy or diminish these partial evils without inflicting a general wrong? Property, we know, has its duties as well as its rights. Because some landlords have neglected their duties, it would be manifestly unjust to violate the rights of all. An act which should compel landlords to grant leases, and yet provide no means of enforcing the fulfilment of their conditions upon the tenants, would be an act of confiscation, injurious to the landlords, and in the long run still more injurious to those whom it was intended to benefit. For the tenant, finding himself absolutely secure, would have no motive for exertion, and the landlord, being deprived of the management of his own estate, would have less inducement than ever to reside upon it. All that we can do is to provide some easily accessible authority to whom the tenant can

appeal if he thinks himself hardly used. Such appeal might lie in all cases to the Stipendiary Magistrate of the district, who should be empowered to decide every dispute between landlord and tenant, to determine the amount of compensation to be allowed for improvements, and so forth. A landlord might even be required to obtain the sanction of the magistrate before raising his rents; and no landlord should be allowed to employ the constabulary in case of eviction, without the magistrate's warrant. The imposition of these new functions would of course require an augmentation of the pay, or an increase in the number, of Stipendiary Magistrates*. For the discharge of these duties they would, as a body, be very well qualified. Thus the tenant would be secured against oppression.

His condition might be permanently improved by the adoption of a second measure of a very different kind. Let the Government purchase estates, either such as have passed through the Landed Estates Court, or those of proprietors willing to sell, and require from its tenants a rent such as would pay a small interest on the outlay, and in the course of a certain number of years, say twenty, replace the capital. At the end of this time the tenant would become the proprietor. The terms, of course, should be so favourable as to induce tenants to enter willingly into the scheme. The loss to the state might be recompensed by the funds derived from the confiscated endowments of the Church, which would thus be applied strictly to Irish purposes, in the shape of a bonus to the tenants. The prospect of becoming owners of the land they till would be an immense stimulus to industry and thrift. If the experiment were successful, many public-spirited land-owners would follow the example of the state,

* There are now seventy-two stipendiary magistrates in Ireland.

and thus a large class of farmer and peasant proprietors would be created. The moral and social advantages of the change can scarcely be estimated too highly.

Beyond these measures we can scarcely go without infringing upon the rights of proprietors, rights sanctioned by the usage of all civilized nations, not privileges secured to them by exceptional legislation, as such rights are sometimes assumed to be. It is better to tolerate evil which cannot be remedied without injustice.

Would it be just to pass an Act compelling non-resident landlords to sell their estates? There are no doubt many who spend the rents derived from their Irish estates in idleness and pleasure abroad, but there others who are engaged in business or in professional duties in London, Dublin, and elsewhere, upon whom such a measure would fall very hardly. Some, too, have greater estates and more important interests in England, and in this class are some of the best, the most enlightened and most generous of Irish landlords. In many cases an estate is too small for its proprietor to reside on, except he cultivate his own land. Corporate bodies, too, are necessarily non-resident. And yet some of these, as for instance Trinity College, are said to be most indulgent landlords.

Again, if non-residents are compelled to sell, the new purchaser would be compelled to reside, and land clogged with such a condition would fetch a much lower price, and thus an additional injury would be inflicted upon the present owner. A general measure therefore, affecting all absentees, seems to be inconsistent with justice, while on the other hand a measure which should discriminate between different classes of absentees, is impracticable. Were we to arm the state with powers ever so inquisitorial, these would be defeated by

the arts of subterfuge which the persons threatened would think themselves entitled to employ in repelling what would seem to them an unjustifiable aggression.

Such measures as I have been advocating will seem feeble and inefficient to the supporters of "heroic remedies." But, as I have said before, these doctors exaggerate the dangers of the patient's state. And be the patient ever so ill, how do we know that a remedy, which has never been tried on any one, will cure him? Those who know the patient's symptoms best are unanimous against the remedy proposed by Mr. Mill. They are of opinion that Ireland would not be benefited by having the government for sole landlord*. Certainly the British Empire would not be strengthened by a plan which would unite all its Irish tenantry in one vast conspiracy against it: and that this would be the result is certain, for every tenant would see that a successful rebellion would make him a freeholder at once. But such a proposal is too contrary to the traditions and maxims of English policy to be taken into serious consideration by any statesman of whatever party. It is "heroic" indeed, like the labours of Hercules; as impracticable as they are fabulous.

Again, we are told that we ought to legislate according to Irish ideas on property, not according to English ideas. What are these "Irish ideas?" The idea that a tenant has a right to sell or bequeath the good-will of his tenancy is one which sprung up only in the last century, and is most strong in the least Irish part of Ireland, that is, in the province of Ulster. It is therefore not an Irish idea in the proper sense of the word, and it is a grave historical error to connect it with the notion which prevailed among the "Irishry" in old

* See *Mr Mill's Plan for the Pacification of Ireland Examined*, by Lord Dufferin. 1868.

times, that the land belonged in common to the Sept or Clan. This notion, again, is not an exclusively Irish or even Celtic idea, for it was held by our Saxon forefathers in Germany, and probably by all races in a certain stage of civilization. The notion of individual freeholds marks a more advanced stage, and is an essential condition of social progress. The Irish chieftains eagerly embraced the English idea, which made them absolute owners of the land of which they were previously the elected trustees, and thus, though they wronged their followers at the time, yet helped to establish a more settled state of things. As there is no instance of any Celtic race advancing to the more settled stage of civilization except through the agency of foreign conquest, we do not know whether without English interference they would of themselves have developed the conception of individual ownership, but we may be sure that without it they would have made no further progress towards social security and national strength. To recur to a barbarous custom by artificial means is to ignore the lessons of all history and all experience.

The "Irish idea" current among the tenants and peasants of Munster and Connaught, that their ancestors were all kings forcibly dispossessed by the Saxon, is one as little fitted to be made the basis of legislation, as it is to bear the test of historical criticism.

I do not attempt to discuss any larger measures, such as are contemplated by some of the more advanced Liberals, to prevent the too great accumulation of landed estates in the hands of a few, because this is an evil from which Great Britain suffers as much as Ireland, and such measures will be applicable to the whole United Kingdom, not enacted specially for Ireland.

One more question remains. It will have been observed

that the priests who take part in political agitation have again and again declared that they will be satisfied with nothing less than Repeal of the Union and an independent legislature for Ireland. To this request every English statesman will return a positive refusal. Both Imperial and Irish interests properly considered, forbid it. But can we not do something to gratify the sentiment which prompts the demand? Ireland has felt herself, not unnaturally, to have been treated as a dependency. She has not of late been much misgoverned or oppressed, but she has been slighted. By one simple method she would be placed on an equality with Great Britain. Let the Imperial Parliament hold an autumnal session in Dublin. At this session Irish affairs would be naturally and most conveniently discussed, without any absolute limitation being laid down beforehand. Of course some inconvenience would be felt in thus changing the seat of government, but this inconvenience would be small in these days of rapid communication, and would be as nothing in comparison of the gain of a conciliated Ireland. The great obstacle in the way is the personal inconvenience and expense which such a plan would entail upon the English and Scotch members of both Houses. But, seeing that the feelings and wishes of churchmen and landlords are not to be allowed to stand in the way of any change which is for the general good, why should not members of Parliament be expected to make a sacrifice on their part? If any were not able to bear the expense, let them be paid for their attendance. This, of course, would involve the payment of Irish members for their attendance in London, and the proposal would encounter great opposition as the first step towards the payment of members generally. It would be called "the thin end of the democratic wedge," a simile which to some minds

is more powerful than all argument. In any case, the poorer Liberals might find Conservatives of an economical turn to pair off with, and legislators who preferred Homburg or the Highlands to Dublin, would have no difficulty in finding others of similar tastes on the opposite side to pair off with them. Seriously, it is the opinion of the present writer, confirmed by the almost unanimous assent of those Irishmen with whom he has conversed, that the presence of the Sovereign and the Legislature during a portion of each year would do more to flatter the pride and win the affection of Ireland than all other measures of reform put together.

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